

Reservation number one. [Laughter] And I want you all to take note of that the next time you hear somebody say the President's off the reservation. [Laughter] I'm actually here with Hillary and Chelsea on part of the original design of Washington laid out by George Washington and Pierre L'Enfant. Like other families who've lived here, we've had the honor of planting several trees on these grounds, a willow oak, a leaf linden, an American elm. We love this place that is maintained by our Park Service.

I want to recognize two special contributors and say I enjoyed having my picture taken with the White House staff, who do so much to maintain the house and the grounds, just a moment ago. I want to thank our Head Usher, Gary Walters, who does a great job for us on so many events here. Where's Gary? There's Gary back there. And I'd like to ask Irv Williams, the Executive Grounds Superintendent—for nearly 40 years he's been here. Where are you, Irv? Stand up. Thank you so much. Three decades ago, Mr. Williams helped Jacqueline Kennedy redesign the First Lady's Garden. It was later renamed the Jacqueline Kennedy Garden. It is just opposite the Rose Garden in the back of the White House. It's another of the wonderful legacies that this fine lady left our country with the help of Irv Williams, who's given his life to this work, and we thank you, sir.

Wallace Stegner said, "The National Parks are the best idea we ever had. Absolutely demo-

cratic, absolutely American, they reflect us at our best rather than our worst." I could say it no better. Let us try to live by the mottoes of the National Parks. Let us try to lift our spirits on a daily basis as we are all uplifted when we visit them. And let us for the rest of our lives rededicate ourselves to preserving and enhancing them. They are the legacy of every generation. They're our hope for the future, our tie to the past, our connection to the land. They're bigger than any of us, and they make us all better. And we thank you all for your contribution to that end.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to George T. Frampton, Jr., Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fish and Wildlife and Parks; Roger Kennedy, Director, National Park Service; Laurence W. Lane, Jr., former Ambassador to Australia and Japan; Steven W. Coleman, founder and president, and Josephine Butler, vice chair, Friends of Meridian Hill; Phyllis Cohen, deputy superintendent, Dade County Public School District; Richard Gale, director, National Fire Center, Boise, ID; and Elizabeth Barlow Rogers, administrator, New York City Central Park. The National Park Week proclamation of April 14 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With President Guntis Ulmanis of Latvia and an Exchange With Reporters

May 24, 1994

President Clinton. Since we're not going to do a press availability—it's late in the afternoon—I'd like to make a brief statement about the purpose of this meeting and then ask President Ulmanis to say a few words.

First, I want to welcome him to the United States and express my appreciation for the close working relationship we have had with him during my tenure and his, which have overlapped.

Our administration has worked very hard to support the withdrawal of Russian troops from the Baltics in general and from Latvia in par-

ticular. We have been very involved in trying to help resolve the dispute between Russia and Latvia over the facility at Skrunda, and we have been very pleased at the resolution of that. And we have supported the resettlement of Russian soldiers and the housing program for them when they leave the Baltics and go back home. And so we look forward to the completion of that effort this summer. And we are very, very pleased about it. It's an important part of our overall objectives and our long-term relationships with all the nations in the Baltics area

and the CIS, and particular with Russia. So I'm very pleased about that.

I'm glad to have President Ulmanis here. And he perhaps has a word or two he'd like to say.

President Ulmanis. I'm honored about the progress that has been made since I have met with the American President. At that time we talked about very difficult problems, and I'm happy to say that some of those problems have been resolved.

An issue that's very important to the Baltic area is the whole question of troop patrols, and that will occur after a few months. We have legally established a basis for the Skrunda facility, and we have ensured that this will not be turned into a Russian military base.

This is a great achievement also for the United States, since we worked together on this issue and were able to resolve it together. And today I have come here to talk about the way we can work together in the future.

I want to ensure that in the future the Baltic area is not a victim of any kind of aggression, that we establish a good—[inaudible]—stimulating the area and that we begin to develop that area economically.

When I was speaking with the Pope recently, we talked about the fact that the Baltic area could be a key to peace in that area. Now we can talk about various kinds of development in the area of agriculture and social fields, in economic area. But most importantly, we need to talk about how we can help former Russian army personnel leave the Baltic area voluntarily.

Thank you.

Russia and the Baltic Countries

Q. You're sure they will pull out? And does that mean out of the entire Balkans area, out of Estonia, Lithuania, wherever they are?

[*President Ulmanis' response was translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

President Ulmanis. He's convinced that that will be the case, and that's why he's here.

President Clinton. Our preliminary—I say it's not preliminary with regard to Lithuania and Latvia—but we think by the summer that all the negotiations will be concluded. The Yeltsin government and President Yeltsin himself have been personally—he's been personally involved in this. I have been personally involved in it. We discussed these matters in enormous detail

when I was in Russia. I think it's going in the right direction.

And the leadership of President Ulmanis and the leaders of all the Baltic States, I think, has been quite key to this. So I feel good about it. I think it's going in the right direction. And it clearly will be a force for stability and democracy in the years ahead in that part of the world.

China and Japan

Q. [Inaudible]—Secretary Christopher has been consulting with Congress today. Have you got a better idea on what you plan to do about MFN for China and where that's going, and could you share that with us?

President Clinton. Yes, I have an idea of where it's going. No, I'm not prepared to share it with you, because we still have not only ongoing negotiations with Congress but with others as well, and there are a number of things that still have to be resolved. We're working through it as quickly as we can. We will resolve it as quickly as we can.

I do want to say that the United States announced some very good news today. Late last night we reached agreement with the Japanese on returning to our trade talks with them. They are an important part of our long-term strategy for peace and stability and democracy in Asia. And I think that will support what we hope will be a long-term, positive relationship with China and our desire to advance the cause of human rights within the country. I think Japanese—the break there with the negotiations is a big plus. And we've been working hard on it. I talked to Prime Minister Hata today. I'm very encouraged about that. And we'll have the Chinese decision as quickly as we can work through it.

Q. Before you go to Normandy? Before you go to Normandy?

Q. Is there going to be a Cabinet shakeup?

President Clinton. Sometimes I'm the last to know, but as far as I know there isn't. [Laughter] Unless you know something I don't, the answer is no.

Well, the deadline's June 3d. And I don't expect to announce it in Europe.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:16 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. President Ulmanis spoke in Latvian, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.